

# The Awful Jumble of Humanity in Warsaw

By MADELINE LINFORD

**MISS LINFORD, a Manchester, England, newspaper writer, recently wrote for The Dearborn Independent readers her observations while on a trip to Vienna. She went from that city to Warsaw, and here we have what she saw. It is a most interestingly written article, telling simply and clearly of the conditions of the people in that city.**

THE Entente diplomatic train runs from Paris to Warsaw through many gem-like places with Vienna drooping, a lovely, broken pendant, in the middle. At the far end of the chain, Warsaw is striving to disengage herself from her tangle of mistakes and misfortunes.

I reached the city at two o'clock on a winter morning. The station was crowded with people—peasants, long-coated Jews and soldiers—running across the lines from one dirty train to another. There is no heating in these trains, no artificial light and, in many cases, no glass in the carriage windows. All around, there surged that queer language which to the foreigner sounds so utterly unintelligible and strange. Outside the station, the city was startlingly quiet, for no one is allowed to be in the streets after midnight without a pass. It was like the home of the Sleeping Beauty before the kiss had been given. The feet of the horse drawing my droshky made a "flop, flop" sound on the snowy streets and the jangle of his bell was thrown back from one aloof building to another. On the way, I passed the great Russian church—an immense and wonderful building of white marble and green domes standing in an open square and, when I first saw it, aureoled in a misty halo of moonlight.

When Poland was freed from Russian rule, it was on this building that the Poles first wreaked their centuries of hate and resentment. In an attempt to save it, the religion of the church was changed from Orthodox to Roman Catholic, but even then the people of Warsaw determined that it should be pulled down. This was stopped by the Allies after one tower had been destroyed. The rest of the building is untouched. It is florid rather than artistic, curious rather than beautiful, but to the alien mind it has the charm of being almost the only strikingly Eastern structure that Warsaw possesses. Apart from it, the city, with its wide streets and splendid buildings, is very reminiscent of Vienna.

During the time I spent in Warsaw, the cold was so intense that it was hard to keep one's thoughts from the keen wind and from the big flakes of snow that whirled in the air like blown, white petals. One was apt at first to shrink from turning corners with a cutting blast waiting on the other side of them and to avoid the unsheltered paths by the Vistula. But the magic of a strange city, with every street sign written in an unknown tongue and every passer-by an unfamiliar

type, can easily overcome the discouragement of inclement weather. When one has braved the first turning and the first sharpness of the wind, the next has no terrors. Warsaw is too glowingly adventurous to be peeped at through the timid, narrow limits of window frames, and there is, in addition, the more prosaic argument that shortage of fuel makes the indoors of Poland very little warmer than the streets.

The material damage suffered during the Great War—as distinct from the war Poland is still carrying on against Soviet Russia—is not very apparent. Of the four railway stations, only one is sound enough to be used, and one of the bridges across the river is broken. Otherwise I saw no trace of the heavy bombardments the city underwent, nor of the terrible fighting that surged around it. But in every other respect the after-war distress is very acute.

There is a curious difference between the distress of Vienna and that of Warsaw. In both cities the cost of living has increased to an appalling extent and there is great scarcity of all kinds of food and material. The plight of Vienna is rather the worse of the two, and that is more strange when one compares the splendid, smooth-running organization of the Austrian capital with the turbulent muddle that prevails in Poland. There is sorrow enough in Warsaw and thousands of people are dying of sheer starvation, but whereas in Vienna no amount of money can buy the really attractive meal, in Warsaw there is good food to be bought by the wealthy. At quite unpretentious restaurants three meat courses are served at a table d'hôte luncheon, for breakfast I was given a glass of coffee with half an inch of pure cream on the top. And yet at the little Polish town, 180 miles away, where I had been staying, there is not a drop of milk for babies, and entire families live on a diet of frost-bitten potatoes and sometimes chunks of black bread. For people like myself with nearly four hundred marks to the English pound, it is possible to live comfortably in Warsaw; for the poor and the middle class natives, existence is just a short tragedy of unutterable misery. Almost the only article of food that cannot easily be bought is sugar and all cakes are unsweetened.

In Vienna I only once saw a queue waiting outside a shop, because what little food there is, is systematically rationed. In Warsaw the long lines of people waiting outside tobacconists and grocery houses crowd up the pavements. They seem to be there at all hours of the day and in every part of the city. Most of the men and women are emaciated and the children are very pitiful looking. Their little skeleton bodies, often crippled with rickets, show in raw and frozen patches through the dirty rags of their garments.

The streets of Warsaw are thronged with soldiers—a jumbled, heterogeneous mass of the army that is fighting. They are amazingly nondescript as to uniform. Some are in the orthodox grey-green of the Polish army, the officers wearing short, fur-bordered coats. Others are in the horizon-blue of the French soldier, and others again wear the khaki of the British Tommy. In the last two cases, the uniforms were supplied by the Allies. There are representatives, too, of

all the other nations who have put a helpful or mischievous finger in the muddle of the Polish pie—American Red Cross workers who are striving to keep down the typhus plague; officials of the French Military Mission; gorgeously-dressed commissaries of the English police sent over to instruct the Warsaw police force. I saw Italians, Rumanians, Hungarians and Greeks. Around one table in a café sat an American doctor, a soldier wearing the picturesque cock feathers of Italy's famous regiment, a Polish Jew and a French poilu. They seemed to be talking to one another; heaven knows in what language! No city could be more cosmopolitan than Warsaw is today.

Unfortunately, not all its visitors are there on disinterested or benevolent errands. The low value of Polish money has made Warsaw a very profitable place for buying goods to be sold at a much higher rate in other countries. The shops are stocked with beautiful things which are excessively cheap to purchasers with foreign money. On my journey there I met a Polish American who had been granted his passport in order that he might visit the parents he had left in Cracow 19 years before. He owned quite frankly that his real purpose was to buy a large stock of furs and sell them with immense profit in America. A Warsaw jeweller told me that he would no longer serve French officers, as in countless cases they had bought his finest gems for the equivalent of a few hundred francs and later made a profit of a few thousand on them. In the Entente train from Warsaw, I noticed a young man wearing no fewer than five diamond rings. To every stranger who would listen, he related with pride and joy the bargain he hoped to make with each. By decking his fingers with them, he avoided having to pay duty. It is good business perhaps, this exploiting of another country's poverty, but it causes very keen bitterness in Poland.

One of the most strikingly sad features of Warsaw streets is the number of beggars. There seems to be no attempt at all to control them. They creep into every café, every shop, every public building. Little ragged children will patter on their bare and frostbitten feet for several hundred yards by the side of you, imploring in words whose sound is strange but whose meaning is only too piteously clear. It is a queer contradiction, therefore, to find that the system of tipping is much less extensive and elaborate than it is, say, in Paris. To a restaurant bill in Warsaw ten per cent is added "for service" and the individual waiter is given nothing by the customer.

The Polish official has one very charming characteristic, and that is his reluctance to meddle in what he does not understand. If you and he do not know each other's language, then he considers it simpler to let you go your own way—whether you are wandering in prohibited places or traveling in the wrong tram—than to embark on fruitless discussions. If you are wearing any kind of an unfamiliar uniform, he will not trouble you however unconventionally you behave. On a short journey which I took between Czeszochowa and the remote, little town I have already mentioned, I lost my ticket. I had no Polish in which to explain this to the collector at my destination, so I handed him the receipted bill of a dinner I had had the night before on the government train. With this he seemed perfectly satisfied.

## Farmer Calvin Pays His Respects to City Critics

MANY farmers seem to be getting a trifle weary of the continuous stream of free advice that is being handed to them by "city folks." Among such framers is Elvis Absalom Calvin, one of the best known agriculturalists of the Southwest. Farmer Calvin recently visited Washington in behalf of the tillers of the soil. Every time he attempted to tell any one about the true conditions existing among the farmers he was stopped by an avalanche of criticism and suggestions.

Here is the way he got back at his city critics:

"Every time the farmers complain about not receiving sufficient pay for their products to enable them to live in comfort and enjoy some of the pleasures of their more favored city cousins, there is a regular whirlwind of criticism and free advice from the city folks.

"Most of the aforesaid critics will resent the statement that the city folks are more favored than the country folks, but merely to resent the statement is not sufficient. They must tell us why there is a constant flood of country folks pouring into the cities and why this flood cannot be checked.

"While the city folks are so enthusiastically picturing the many ways that the farmers can increase production and at the same time decrease hours of labor and expense and thus enable them to produce more for the city consumers, it might be well for some of the wiser ones to explain why it is that the city consumers have to pay from 50 per cent to 5,000 per cent more than the farmers receive for their products when they start them on their journey to the city consumers. If the wise ones would devote some of their time to taking up the slack in the movement of goods from producer to consumer, they would perform a real service to humanity and eliminate a lot of criticism directed at the country folks by the city folks. The city folks are responsible for the wide spread between producers' prices and consumers' prices, and it is up to them to find a remedy and apply it. It is this wide, and ever increasingly wider, spread that is responsible for the flow of people to the cities, for why should a person spend several months or a year in the production of an article when he can move to the city and

make two or three times as much in a few hours by merely handling the same article?

"And while the wise ones are explaining, we want them to tell us why it is that the butchers or retail meat dealers are able to get more for the simple process of cutting the meat and handing it over the counter than the farmers, bankers, buyers, railroads, packers and distributors get altogether for their services.

"We want them to tell us why it is that bread eaters have to pay at the rate of \$35 per barrel for flour when made into bread, while the farmer who grew the wheat received less than \$10 for it.

"It might be well to explain why Bill Jones has to pay from \$75 to \$100 for a suit of clothes made of wool for which the farmer who grew the sheep received less than \$5. And it would be interesting to know what becomes of the difference between 25 cents, the

amount the farmer receives for the cotton in six yards of gingham, and the \$5 the housewife pays for it at the dry goods store. And also, please tell us who gets the difference between the few cents the farmers get for their hides and the \$16 we pay for a pair of shoes.

"Wake up, Mr. City Man! There is a wonderful opportunity for some real work, for the same thing applies all along the line. The fault is not with the farmers but with the methods employed by you city folks in distributing the farmers' products. If the farmer is slack and unscientific in his methods of production, what must be said of the city folks who are responsible for methods of distribution which permit middlemen to take from 50 to 5,000 per cent on farm products on their way to the consumers? We ask you to solve this problem before you criticize the farmers for being behind the times."



Oldest House in Germany

HERE is a charming bit of twelfth century architecture that was constructed so well that today it stands as firm and staunch as when it was completed, it is said. Experts who have been conducting an investigation say that it is the oldest house in Germany and it has been proposed that it shall be converted into a museum for the exhibition of antiques.

Efforts have been made to learn who first owned the building and who had charge of the work of erection. It is known that the building was completed in 1178, and there is no authentication of any building now standing in Germany having been erected prior to that date. It is declared to be in the best of condition throughout, the beams showing little sign of weakening.